1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

CANOES

[481] 501 502 868 The Yaruros dislike to travel any distance afoot. The canoe, therefore, is practically his only means of transportation. As a result, they are extraordinarily good canoemen, learning both how to build and to manage one from childhood. It is not an uncommon sight to see little children of 5 or 6 years of age paddling furiously in midstream. Their expertness can best be illustrated by the following incident: The llanos are exposed to the trade winds in the dry season, which at times blow very hard. On our return from La Urbana we found the crossing of the Orinoco to the mouth of the Capanaparo a dangerous undertaking.

The Yaruro dugouts are clumsy affairs at best, but in addition to that, ours had a gaping hole about 10 inches in diameter in the stern and it was with some qualms that I stepped into it to negotiate the rather rough waters with the help of a 12-year-old boy. Since the Yaruro steers from the bow, that place of honor was allotted to the youngster, I furnishing the power. During the passage across I despaired several times of being able to hold the canoe in the right direction, but whenever we found ourselves caught in some especially difficult whirlpool this lad would turn and laugh, not in derision but in encouragement, which was calculated, I suppose, to bolster my spirit, but helped not at all in easing the strain on my arms. His knowledge of the currents and his proper timing in signaling to me to paddle one way or the other, as well as deft steering, finally got us across safely. When this incident was over and I looked back over the rough waters, my respect for Yaruro canoemanship increased manifold.

502 177 Sails are used on the Orinoco and its tributaries, both by the occasional traders and crocodile hunters. The Yaruros have had ample opportunities over several centuries to learn how to make use of them. In fact, some of the younger men who worked occasionally for the ranchers, or traders, do know how. However, in their daily plying up and down the rivers, hunting and fishing, they never employ the sail.

[181] Their conservatism is further illustrated by another fact. The Racionales will always pole their canoes when traveling upstream. The Yaruros know how to do this also, but only when they are working for someone else. In their everyday life they depend entirely on the paddle.

502 The steersman generally sits in the bow, especially when moving downstream and the paddler is alone, pulling the canoe after him. The paddler in the stern, if one is present, really furnishes the motive power. The Yaruro generally paddles sitting down in the bot-